

SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Best Western
M-28 East
Wetmore, Michigan
December 8, 2005

Chairman Manson called the meeting of the Snowmobile Advisory Committee (SAC) to order at 9:12 a.m., Thursday, December 8, 2005 in Wetmore, Michigan.

Members Present:

Bill Manson, Region III, Michigan Snowmobile Association (MSA), Grand Rapids
James Duke, Region I, MSA, Munising
Bill Lucas, Region II, MSA, Cadillac
Jack Nelson, Business Community, Greenville
Orville Olson, Representative at Large, Ludington

Members Absent:

Elza Inman, Grant Sponsors, Brethren
Lee Murray, At-Large, Hopkins

Ex-Officio Members Present:

Carol Boll, USDA, Huron-Manistee National Forest
Anne Okonek, USDA, Hiawatha National Forest
Randy Charles, USDA, Ottawa National Forest

Staff Present:

Richard Kennedy, Forest, Mineral & Fire Management (FMFM), Lansing
Steve Kubisiak, Recreation and Trails Program Coordinator, FMFM, Lansing
Steve DeBrabander, State Trails Unit Manager, FMFM, Lansing
Ron Yesney, FMFM, Western UP
Dan Moore, FMFM, Eastern UP
Pete Wright, Law Enforcement Division (LED), District 4, Marquette
Mike Paluda, FMFM, Marquette
Brian Mensch, FMFM, Newberry FMU
Paul Gaberdiel, FMFM, Newberry FMU
Jay Osterberg, FMFM, Newberry FMU
Kay Fisher, FMFM, Gwinn FMU
Pete Glover, FMFM, Gwinn FMU
Celeste Chingwa, FMFM, Shingleton FMU
Terry Popour, FMFM, Gwinn FMU
Loretta Cwalinski, FMFM, Gaylord

The Snowmobile Advisory Committee, Department of Natural Resources (Department) staff and audience introduced themselves. **Mr. Bill Manson** welcomed everyone.

MINUTES

The minutes of the September 27, 2005 Snowmobile Advisory Committee Meeting was acknowledged.

Motion by Mr. Lucas to adopt the minutes of the September 27, 2005 meeting seconded by Mr. Duke; motion for adoption unanimously carried.

NEW BUSINESS

Insurance - **Mr. Manson** introduced Mr. Dale Vagts from V&V Insurance. **Mr. Vagts** highlighted the policy and provisions for limits, additional insured and exclusions. Additional insured are covered for liability. Exclusions include property damage. Damage to private property caused by a groomer would not be covered if the land owner is listed as an additional insured. **Mr. Vagts** said this would normally be covered by the landowner's home owner insurance.

Discussion ensued concerning additional insured. **Mr. Vagts** reiterated that all names of additional insured need to be listed and in the records with V&V. **Mr. Manson** agreed that the Clubs need to keep up with any name changes or additions.

Beginning with the 2006 renewal which expires April 15, 2006, V & V will develop a new additional insured list. After the renewal date, new additional insured may be added at no cost.

Mr. Manson noted there is an opportunity to change the policy renewal date. Staff will follow-up with Grants Management and report back to Mr. Manson with a recommendation for a new date. Discussion continued.

Mr. Vagts instructed the group on the procedure to follow if there is an accident and added that anyone with financial interest should be listed on the policy. The amount covered is \$1 million per occurrence, or \$2 million aggregate. Also, if any agreements arise with local governments, it was recommended that those documents be sent to V&V, which in turn will have their Underwriters examine and make any changes needed. He offered copies of the policy to anyone interested.

Mr. Manson suggested the workgroup may need further discussions on insurance issues.

Chocolay Township Speed Limit Update – **Mr. Steve DeBrabander** updated the group on the request to establish a speed limit on a 4.5 mile stretch of trail through a residential area in Chocolay Township. Local residents are concerned over safety and excessive noise along the trail. The Workgroup has discussed and established a process and criteria to consider these requests in the future. A public meeting was held November 29 which had seventy attendees. Public comments were taken, with the majority wanting a speed limit. The Department will look at all the information, send it to the Resource Director and then on to the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) for their next meeting.

Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Request for Funding to Repair Road Crossing Damage – Tabled. **Mr. Kubisiak** advised that Mr. Randy VanPortfliet with MDOT was unable to attend the meeting. He said he will extend an invitation for him to attend a future meeting.

Sign Recall Update – **Mr. Richard Kennedy** advised that most of the clubs have returned their defective signs and they have been inspected by Lyle Signs. The problem was with the sheeting, as they had changed their supplier. Several of the replacement signs have been shipped out. The orange material has not been shipped yet, but will be shipped by December 15. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the clubs to advise if they've put up signs that were defective, and how much time they put in removing the defective signs and putting up the new ones, or an estimated count of posting and removing defective signs. There will be a letter sent to sponsors requesting this information. If signs remain that are defective, please advise your field contact so they can be returned to Lyle Signs.

Mr. Orville Olsen asked **Mr. Kennedy** to resolve the sign problems, and **Mr. Kennedy** added that the sign contracts run for three years, this being the last year on that contract. Mr. Joe Taylor, Program

Services Section Manager, is currently working with the Department of Management and Budget (DMB) on a new contract that will be competitively bid.

M-65 AuSable River Bridge Update – Mr. Kubisiak reported the new bridge over the AuSable River was completed last summer. It is MDOT's intent to retain ownership of the Old M65 Bridge and manage it as a pedestrian bridge in the summer and permit snowmobiling in the winter. The Forest Service, Iosco County Parks, MDOT and officials from Consumers Energy and GTE met last summer.

Mr. Manson noted that he was surprised the bridge was done.

Mr. Dan Moore said that the club should take care of the trail details in that area. It is his understanding that MDOT's intent was to give the bridge to the Department, but that hasn't been finalized yet. **Mr. Don Carroll, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club** added that several groups are involved with that process.

Mr. Manson asked if Mr. Kubisiak could facilitate a meeting to get the process moving along. **Mr. Kubisiak** will follow-up with MDOT and the U.S. Forest Service, and advise.

Emergency Signs – Mr. Bill Lucas presented a recommended standard for emergency signage and referenced a handout. **Mr. Lucas** reviewed the recommendation.

Mr. Lucas made a motion, seconded by Mr. Olson to have the Department accept, and use their recommended sign standard throughout Michigan.

Mr. Manson recognizes there are several emergency sign systems used throughout the State, however, the Committee's recommendation would be to adopt this system as an approved standard from now on. Also, it was mentioned that the signs be left up all year around for use by ORV riders, mushroom pickers, hunters and any other trail users.

Mr. Manson said he was in agreement with whatever language the Department decides to use whether it is that the Committee endorses or recommends approval of statewide usage of the emergency signs.

Mr. Manson called for a voice vote:

Mr. Manson -- Aye
Mr. Duke -- Aye
Mr. Lucas -- Aye
Mr. Nelson -- Aye
Mr. Olson -- Aye

Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

Brushing Issues – Mr. DeBrabander discussed brushing and some of the recent inspections and Failure to Comply letter/pictures that have raised questions of clean-up and safety. When brushing, clubs need to make sure that blunt limbs are removed from both standing trees and trees cut closer to ground level. There will be verbiage added to the handbook to address proper and safe brushing.

Mr. Manson added that during a demonstration for the brushing equipment, it was shown that when trying to cut the branches to the base of the limbs or trunk, it took an excessive amount of time. **Mr. Manson** requested that the discussion be continued for any handbook additions to make sure all concerns are addressed.

Mr. Bruce Wood, Jordan Valley Trails Council defended their trimming on the higher limbs as he felt the photographs taken were premature to their finishing that project. The work was done in November, and took several days to complete. He added that there were hundreds of brushing hours involved, and that there was a second cut after mechanically cutting as well.

Mr. Moore said that he felt that the field contact was premature in sending the *failure to perform* notice.

Mr. Kevin Giar, Antrim County Snowmobile Club addressed concerns to Mr. DeBrabander over the mechanical equipment used to do brushing. He said it's not possible to flush cut with the type of equipment they are using. At best, the equipment can only cut within 4" to the ground. He also added that they are supposed to remove hazardous trees.

Mr. John Hbuk, Presque Isle Sno-Trails explained the sickle bar side-cutters make it difficult to make level cuts. He also mentioned that there are concerns of cutting tree or limbs that are bent over, and the possibility of hitting rocks and damaging their equipment.

Mr. DeBrabander said he appreciates everyone's comments and dialog, and is hoping for everyone to work together on this issue. He will look into the recent *failure to perform* notice to determine if there was any miscommunication.

Mr. Don Carroll, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club commented that he would like to attend trail inspections with his Department Field Contact. He said that he had difficulty notifying his field contact and that the trails have still not been completely inspected as of December. Discussion continued.

Mr. Bud Martin, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club referenced the sickle cutters and the excess brush left behind. He noted that the stubble is only visible after brush is removed. He also added that their club has had difficulty with getting a request to bid out special maintenance through their field contact.

Mr. Martin Cottle, Sault Snowmobile Association/EUP Snowmobile Council noted the Department was at first allowing cut stubble to be left behind, but after all the work was finished on their trail they were told that it wasn't good enough.

Mr. Denny Zoet, Western Michigan Snowmobile Council made a suggestion that it would be a good idea for field contacts to attend snow club meetings so everyone would have the same understanding of requirements.

Mr. Tony Autore, Les Cheneaux, Cedarville added that he's concerned over the Department being too particular, and there is never a 'thank you' for all the work the clubs do.

Mr. Sid Hamill, Grand Traverse Snow Council said their club also received a failure to perform notice related to brushing. He noted that brushing is very hard on equipment and they removed some over-hanging branches because they were damaging the cab on their groomer.

Mr. Mike Paluda said it is important to keep the forest roads and trails clear and safe for the public. He added better communication is crucial for all parties concerned. He also said that he has a great appreciation for all the clubs and their hard work and dedication. Discussion continued.

Mr. Ken Scott, Vice President, Michigan Snowmobile Association asked if there are any better sickles or equipment available now for brushing. Discussion ensued.

Mr. DeBrabander said he will look in to the *failure to perform* notice issue and report back to the Committee.

Mr. Hamill asked the failure to perform notice that had recently been issued to their club be reviewed. He questioned whether or not the field contact should be in charge of these issues. Their group just received their contract in November.

White Pine Trail Mile Markers – **Mr. Lucas** advised the Friends of the White Pine Trail have installed several 6"X6" mile marker posts along the trail and believes they are a safety hazard. He said the location of some of the posts have made it impossible to groom certain sections of the trail. They are currently waiting approval from the State Park Manager to remove the posts that are too close together. He reported that there is a concrete planter box encroaching on the trail in the Village of Tustin.

Mr. Kubisiak reported that in talking with the Parks and Recreation Field Coordinator that the mile marker posts are reported to be at least 9 feet from the center line of the trail and that they do not believe it is a safety hazard.

Mr. Lucas said he would follow-up with the Park Manager to verify specific markers of concern.

STAFF REPORTS

Recreation Specialists – **Ron Yesney, FMFM, Western UP** had a handout as well as updating the Committee on the one-way spur trail to Keweenaw Point. The trail proposal has been approved, and should be done by next year. There may be a loop in the future.

The local clubs are working with private citizens on the trail from Ironwood north to Little Girls Point.

Special Maintenance Projects for bridges are underway, bids are still open; one over Alder Creek and one over Yellow Dog River.

In Iron County, the bridge over the Menominee River was set on fire again. Obvious arson but no leads yet. This was the second time, and there is major damage.

A Citizen's Advisory Committee did vote in favor of using the Houghton railroad grade corridor for snowmobiling; however, two property owners are claiming ownership, and have blocked access to the grade.

The Department is close to completing the acquisition of a 7.5 mile stretch of trail from Republic to Humboldt.

Mr. Yesney mentioned a press release that referenced the purchase of a non-motorized trail with snowmobile funds. **Mr. DeBrabander** asked if the Department had completed a corrective press release.

Mr. Manson asked why \$109,500 of snowmobile funds was used to purchase a non-motorized trail. Mr. Kubisiak will follow-up with Jim Radabaugh.

Mr. Manson also questioned what is happening with the \$4 million dollar supplemental appropriation that was approved last year. Mr. Kubisiak will follow-up with Mr. Radabaugh.

Mr. Yesney also said that they are still waiting on the Attorney General in reference to taking fences down on the Chassel to Houghton grade.

Mr. Moore, FMFM, Eastern UP advised that there has been little snowmobile work so far. He met with MDOT to reference private landowners that cut-off access to Paradise. They erected a private road sign on a county road.

Mr. Manson mentioned Gladstone and Escanaba grant money and that they should be all set. Also to keep an eye on the group to make sure they stick around.

Law Enforcement - Pete Wright, Law Enforcement, Marquette advised there is nothing to report at this time from Law Enforcement.

Forest Service – Randy Charles, USDA, Ottawa National Forest reported that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Forest Service and the Department is still out there waiting to be renewed. The MOU is expired, and he has been instructed to draft a letter to the Department stating that the grant sponsor's ability to groom on National Forest land is in jeopardy if the MOU is not renewed.

Ms. Carol Boll, USDA, Huron-Manistee National Forest reported that in the Huron Shores area there's a completed trail around Horseshoe Lake. On the M-65 Bridge, the ground surveys have been completed. The reroute to Baldwin at 56th Street has been redesigned and closed by MDOT; it is now at 68th Street. All permits are done, and reroute should be complete next winter. The Lakeshore trail proposal at US-10 still has a crossing problem.

Mr. Manson added that the other Recreation Specialists' reports were also handed out with a copy of the last meeting's minutes.

Mr. Manson asked if the clubs need to get an Event Permit when participating in "Fun Runs" that begin on Club property or private property. **Mr. DeBrabander** said he will look into fees and permissibility. **Mr. Manson** wants to know how the State can charge for events that do not start on State land.

Mr. Manson also mentioned concern on removal of some loop trails by field contacts, and questioned why these loops are being closed. Grooming responsibilities may be changing as well. Mr. DeBrabander will follow-up.

Mr. Manson added that the Workgroup discussed fuel prices and looked at readjusting the prices in December to \$4.25 per mile for grooming cost reimbursements. **Mr. Manson** will e-mail his information to Mr. Kubisiak. **Mr. Manson** also said he recommended that Mr. Kennedy attend future Workgroup meetings.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Bud Martin, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club said that they have a special maintenance request in for \$35,000. He rode along with their local Unit Manager and discussed ten different projects. Staff cut two projects that the Club felt was important.

Mr. Kennedy said that once their existing projects are complete they could request to add the projects through an amendment.

Don Carroll, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club mentioned that at the last meeting there was a discussion about trail maps and advertising. He believes that snowmobiler's want advertising on the maps and that it would also be good to list the grooming clubs name on a sign on the trails so the public would know who is responsible for the grooming.

Mr. Manson deferred this to the Department and referenced map boards.

Mr. DeBrabander reported that it is against Department policy to advertise on state lands. Trail maps may be posted along the trails but the advertising must be removed. He noted one of the main concerns is opening up future requests for advertising and escalating to other areas and groups.

Jim Kostin, Antrim County Snowmobile Club added that there are other illegal signs on the trails. Discussion continued.

Gail Scott, Gogebic Area Grooming and WUPCVB referenced maps listing groomers in Gogebic area. The groomers are discerned by color on maps, and she added that snowmobilers do want the maps.

Bruce L. Wood, Jordan Valley Trails Council added that those advertisers are supporting the Clubs and their support by advertising should be visible.

Mr. Lucas said he feels there should be more informational signs telling snowmobilers where to go, and that they actually help with trespass issues.

Don Reed questioned how much money is generated from snowmobiling. He referenced a recent impact study done by two universities, \$27 billion average for five states. The activity also supports 95,000 full-time jobs. The last economic impact study was completed by Michigan State, and **Mr. Manson** agreed that it is time to do another one.

Ken Scott, Vice President of the MSA said Northern Michigan University offered to do a study, which would take one year and cost approximately \$35,000, which would need program support.

Martin Cottle, Soo Snowmobile Association asked about the Event Permits that were discussed two years ago with Mr. Radabaugh – wondering if there was any update with the Engadine trail. **Mr. Moore** said the reroute was almost settled, but the agreement was put on hold. They are still working on a permanent easement.

Mr. Olson said he will e-mail the spreadsheets on equipment costs, etc. He asked to make a motion to have Ken Scott get bids on an impact study from universities, and both universities are interested.

Kevin Giar, Antrim County Snowmobile Club/JVTC asked for direction on a trail in Bellaire and that their Club has had trail issues for four years. Their proposals keep getting denied due to wildlife concerns. **Mr. Manson** suggested they put together a Workgroup to discuss and look at any possibilities.

John Houk, P.I.S.T. & N.E. MI Council questioned the acquisition of the Posen to Rogers City railroad grade at the quarry. The proposal is at the Attorney General's office still under review. They are working with the Real Estate Division due to concerns of possible explosives being stored on the property.

Dave Mason questioned reimbursement to landowners. **Mr. Manson** thought that Jim Radabaugh had the information on that, and was hoping for 90% back. Also, interest will be paid.

Dave Whaley, Trails Inc. mentioned the need for statewide guidelines if groomers break down on a trail. **Mr. Manson** said to always carry Stop and Stop Ahead signs, and place them each way. Also, cones are a good safety caution marker, and taking photographs of the groomer with markers is a good idea.

John Houk, P.I.S.T. & N.E. MI Council questioned a fuel surcharge. Will the fuel adjustment be as of December 1? **Mr. Manson's** recommendation is for December 1 to be the effective date for the adjustment.

Bud Martin, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club reported the destruction of a groomed trail by an ORV or a truck. He was advised to get with **Ms. Boll, USDA, Huron-Manistee National Forest**.

Rollie Rieger, Presque Isle Sno-Trails mentioned that there has been logging after December 1. There were two trails that were brushed and graded in October. Their field contact was on vacation, and since it's on State Land, was advised to get with Unit Manager.

NEXT MEETING

The next SAC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 24, 2006 at 10:30 a.m., BJ's, Restaurant and Catering, 990 N. Center Street, Gaylord, Michigan. Upcoming meetings are scheduled to begin at 10:30 a.m. on:

April 18, 2006, Gaylord

June 20, 2006, Gaylord

September 26, 2006, Gaylord

December 7, 2006, Location to be determined.

The meeting adjourned at 3:17 p.m.

Public Present

Don Carroll, Ogemaw Snowmobile Club
Bud Martin, Ogemaw Snowmobile Club
Sid Hamill, Grand Traverse Snow Council
Larry Potter, U.P. Thunder Riders
Jim Chenowett, U.P. Thunder Riders
John & Jan Mowrey, U.P. Thunder Riders
Tony Autore, Les Cheneaux, Cedarville
John Houk, P.I.S.T. & N.E. MI Council
Bradley Potter, Western MI Snow Council
Tom Myers, MI Snowmobile Assoc. (MSA)
Gail Scott, Gogebic Area Grmg & WUPCVB
Jim Kostin, Antrim County Snowmobile Club
Kevin Giar, Antrim County Snow Club/JVTC
Ken Scott, U.P. M.S.A.
Rolland Rieger, P.I. Snow-Trails
Marshall Bean, Les Cheneaux Snow Club

Kaye L. Houk, Presque Isle Snow Trails
Larry Harp, Antrim County Snow Club
Dale Israels, M.S.A.
Denny Zoet, Western MI Snow Council
Bruce L. Wood, Jordan Valley Trails Council
Al Green, Cadillac Winter Promotions
Dave Whaley, Trails, Inc.
Bob Bobinac, Heart of the N. Snowmobile Cncl.
Rick Brown, M.S.A.
Gary Walser, Houghton Lake C. of C.
David Baden, SW MI Snowmobile Council
Barry Harris, SW MI Snowmobile Council
Ray Ranta, Moose Country Snow Club
Don Britten, Hiawatha Trls, - Marq. Co. Rec. Trls
Dale Vagts, V & V Insurance
